



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

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Vol. 22, No. 9  
June 13, 2008

by

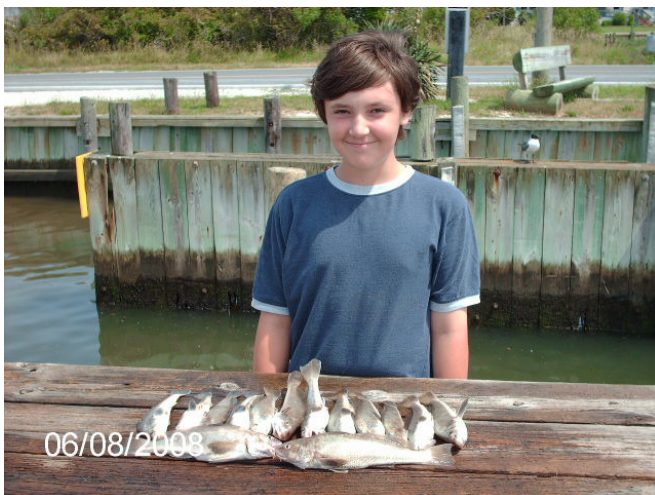
**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**

You have survived summer's HOT and brutal arrival, where a long period of cool to moderate daytime temperatures, reminding you more of April than June, became 100 degree temps overnight. In a matter of a few days, you would have thought we had skipped right over June and gone straight to late July and August!

But a reprieve is upon us, and it looks very fishable! Get out this weekend and enjoy the relatively cool temperatures of the 80's, with some light south winds predicted for Saturday, and plenty of sunshine (if the smoke from the NC fires doesn't obscure it). The water is warmer, the heat wave is over (for now), and its time to enjoy the wonderful summertime fishing Virginia has to offer.

Kingfish are keeping anglers happy near Chincoteague where citation flounder can still be found (some happy anglers from Chincoteague are pictured below). Spadefish are beginning to turn on throughout the area. The wrecks are producing nice catches of black sea bass and some mako sharks have been landed there as well. Offshore action is heating up with tuna, billfish and dolphin. Large croaker are also here and plentiful. It looks to be a great week ahead!





Cobia action is hot right now, just in time for the Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament (see below). This weekend is the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Jimmy Roger's Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament, held at the Hampton Piers in the downtown waterfront district of Hampton (June 13 and 14). Come on down and see the peak weigh-in after 3pm at the Hampton piers (go to <http://www.hamptoncreekcobiatournament.com/> for more details).

**Red drum catch-and-release data is still needed!** VMRC is collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches). You can provide length and location information through the Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal ([www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)). See page 9 for general details about the website.



## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

Donna at Captain Bob's reports that fishing has really picked up near Chincoteague. Kingfish are biting tremendously, and flounder are doing well. The hot spots for both are the Four Mouths area near marker 5, Queen's Sound on the south side of the bridge, and the east side of the Chincoteague Channel on the east side of the sand bar. This area is producing well from in front of Captain Bob's south to Marker 17, particularly near the white buoy. This week two flounder citations were reported—a 7-pound, 4-ounce, 36-inch flounder caught by angler Linda Wertz, and a 7-pound, 12-ounce, 26.5-inch flounder caught by angler Stacey Tubbs. From the surf, a few red drum and kingfish are biting. Spadefish, black sea bass, and flounder have showed up at the wrecks, particularly Water Wreck. Large mako sharks are being hooked by those chumming the waters; the largest this week weighed 166 pounds.

A new addition to the Virginia Saltwater Review, Steve's Bait and Tackle sent us their first fishing report. On the Assateague Surf, kingfish are biting well on East Coast Surf rigs; spot and croaker are biting there as well. At the wrecks, anglers are finding spadefish, black sea bass, and tautog with a few mako sharks mixed in (the largest was 200 pounds). Numerous throwback flounder were reported, and staff suggests drifting in the deeper channel for the larger flounder. Nice spadefish in the 6- to 7-pound range are also being hooked.

### **Wachapreague**

Offshore fishing has been pretty good at the Wachapreague Marina. Last week; one boat had five yellowfin tuna and two dolphin. Flounder fishing has been decent with anglers landing a few keepers per boat. Most are caught right inside of the barrier island. At the wrecks, anglers are reporting nice catches of black sea bass.

At Captain Zed's, anglers reported numerous small flounder with a keeper ratio of 10 undersized to 2 legal-sized (19 inches or greater) flounder. Red drum are being caught in the surf, and the few that have been able

to go wreck fishing have had success with black sea bass. Offshore action is beginning to pick up, as a bluefin tuna was caught this weekend.

### **Cape Charles**

Staff at Chris's Bait and Tackle reports a variety of catches and citations this week. An 11-pound, 3-ounce sheepshead was landed this week along with a 7-pound flounder. Three red drum release citations were reported, all between 47 and 48 inches in length. A 73-pound cobia and a 90-pound, 10-ounce cobia were brought in, as well as a 9-pound spadefish. Most of the red drum action was off of the surf on the seaside of the Eastern Shore, the cobia were caught near Buoy 13, and the spadefish was landed from the Cell.

### **Onancock**

Captain Wil of Onancock reports plenty of croaker and decent catches of red drum in the area, particularly around the islands. Those targeting speckled trout aren't going away empty handed, but anglers are very protective over their secret hot spots for these fish. Striped bass are still being hooked, and a few spot have been reported. Captain Wil has also heard rumors of cobia catches and has seen them swimming around. He says that it is time for summer time fishing, if you can handle the heat.

### **Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel**

Staff at Cobb's Marina reports several citations this week. On June 7, angler Tristan Powel aboard the KNOTTY BOY earned a release citation for a 46-inch red drum. On June 5, Justin Wasco landed a 7-pound, 11-ounce, 28-inch flounder from the second island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Anglers in the area are reporting catches of flounder and a few spadefish.

Sunset Boating Center reports quite a few spadefish from Chesapeake Light Tower. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, a 65-pound citation cobia was brought in, and on the 9<sup>th</sup>, a 60-pound citation cobia was landed at Buckroe Beach. A 40-inch red drum release citation was also recorded on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and on the 7<sup>th</sup>, a citation flounder was caught at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel on live bait. A 3-pound croaker was caught near the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel. Staff reports that striped bass have been found at the Hampton Roads and Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnels.

Cobia, striped bass, and flounder are being caught near Salt Ponds Marina. Most of the flounder action has been at the third and fourth islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel; however, one was caught at Back River Reef last week. Cobia were caught off of the beach in front of Ocean View (one was over 50 pounds).

Staff at York River Fishing Center has heard reports of keeper flounder being found at Bluefish Rock last weekend. There have been several speckled trout citations recently, the newest being a 5-pound, 3-ounce speckled trout caught on the 7<sup>th</sup> by angler Lenard Hicks. No cobia have been brought in yet, despite the efforts of a few dedicated anglers.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

The weather is hot, and so is the fishing. Everything is here now. Billfish have joined into the offshore mix off of Virginia. In fact, offshore action is good from Morehead City to Ocean City and we are right in the middle of it. Tuna, dolphin, wahoo, marlin and sailfish are all being caught

offshore. Out of Virginia, the Triple 0s to the 41200, east of the Cigar has been a good area to fish. Offshore bottom fishermen are doing well with sea bass, tilefish, and a few large snowy grouper. The navy towers are loaded with amberjacks, though the largest of the week was caught at the Chesapeake Light Tower. Spadefish are being caught at the Chesapeake Light Tower and over nearby wrecks. Fewer but larger spadefish are being caught in the Chesapeake Bay at Wolftrap Light and the Cell. A lot of flounder are being caught, but keeper-size flounder are much harder to come by. Back River Reef, 36A, the Cell area, and the Hump have all produced a few keepers. Cobia fishing is in full swing. The Jimmy Roger's Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament is this week. Many of our club members fish this popular event each year. Most cobia fishermen are sitting on chum slicks but with the very calm seas this past weekend, many cobia were caught by sight casting to cruising fish. Spanish mackerel have arrived and they are being caught along the Virginia Beach oceanfront. The red drum bite remains red hot. Anglers are catching them while anchored on the Inner Middle Ground Shoals and around Fisherman's Island. They are also being caught while sight casting when huge schools of red drum are encountered cruising around the lower bay so keep your eyes peeled. The black drum bite is still going on though it is shifting. Fish are still being caught as a bycatch of the red drum fishery, but more are being caught around the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Some sheepshead are being caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The Mobjack Bay area is producing impressive speckled trout.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

With all of the summer species now place, anglers are turning most efforts towards the abundant cobia, which are now available all over the lower bay and inshore waters. These brown-colored hunters are making their presence known as they take chummer's offerings, and cruise along the top waters as if it were August. Boats using the chumming technique are having excellent success from the Rock Pile to the Buckroe area, and Latimer Shoals. Christian Seay and Charles Thain, both from the Eastern Shore, landed an 86-pounder, and a 90-pound bruiser respectively while chumming near buoy 13 this week.

The drum bite is still good, as big reds continue to bite on the shoals and in the surf near Fisherman's Island, as well as the Nine-foot Shoals and Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel area. The black drum action is shifting more to the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, which is common for this time of year.

Spadefish are still lagging behind the usual level of action of years past, as anglers are putting in a full day to land their limits of four fish. The larger spades are coming from inner bay hot spots, such as the Cell and Wolf Trap Light, but the action is still behind the curve. Schools of spades are also available around the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Sheepshead action is not much, but a few fish have cooperated. The best run should appear within a few weeks. An 11-pound sheepshead was hooked while drum fishing at buoy 13 this week.

Pan trout anglers can find takers schooling around the 12-mile marker and up to the high rise section of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, with a few fish still biting near the Concrete ships. There is little word on the larger fish lately. Reports of speckled trout and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are still coming from within Rudee Inlet, Lynnhaven Inlet, and Mobjack Bay. One boat had a good trip in Lynnhaven recently, scoring with thirteen pups up to 25-inches while fishing the outgoing tide.

Small bluefish and croaker are available all over the lower bay. The Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, the Hampton Bar, the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge Tunnel, the James River Bridge, Little Creek, and the southern small boat channel at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel are providing the best action on a range of sizes of hardheads. The folks at Ocean's East 2 report that croaker to over 2 pounds are cooperating at the Coleman Bridge in 45 feet of water.

Folks are catching some flounder, but catching keepers is not an easy feat. The back waters of Oyster are still providing the highest ratio of keepers, with some fish reaching to 7 pounds this week. Other good places to try are the Cell, buoy 36A, and the channel edges and structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets are also still giving up above average numbers of keeper flatfish. Spanish mackerel are providing lots of action along the Virginia Beach ocean front to anglers trolling small Drone and Clark spoons, and Yo-Zuri Crystal Minnows

Deep dropping boats are making a dent in the tilefish population lately. Although many boats catch blueline tiles, the coveted golden tilefish is a more rare catch, with an occasional boat reporting one or two. Captain Steve Wray guided his crew aboard the OCEAN PEARL to the Canyon this week, and loaded up on black sea bass, tilefish, and blackbellied rosefish. The crew landed one golden tilefish, which was the one to get. The lucky crewmember, Aaron Sledd of Virginia Beach, landed the new pending Virginia state record golden tile. The fish tipped the scale at an impressive 65.5 pounds.

Amberjack have been here for several weeks, but a few boats took the initiative to make the run to the best jack-holding structure, the Southern Tower. Large schools of cooperative jacks are there taking baits and jigs, with a few pushing over 51 inches landed. Only a few big jacks are available at the Chesapeake Light Tower, where one 60-pounder was speared by a diver this week.

Offshore, warm water continues to push within range for Virginia boaters, where trollers are hooking into nice yellowfin tuna, and a few bluefin tuna up to 95 pounds. Gaffer dolphin are also hitting, with billfish sightings on the rise and a few released this week, including an unusual sailfish release. The best water is located east of the Cigar in around 500 fathoms of water.

The Oregon Inlet fleet is experiencing a good run on nice big eye tuna recently, while billfish continue to make a good showing.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Jett's Hardware has seen a good number of croaker caught in the mouths of rivers and deeper parts of creeks as the water temperature continues to climb. Bluefish and striped bass were also hooked. However, to catch the larger striped bass, trolling has been paying off the best.

Smith's Point Marina reports catches of striped bass by chumming, but people have had to move north of the state line to find them. Flounder, with keeper sizes mixed in, are being caught around the jetties. Good numbers of croaker and some spot can be found in the deeper waters.

Locklies Marina reports that croaker are being caught in good numbers with some spot mixed in, as well as bluefish being landed around the bridges.

Garrett's Marina reports that croaker are the catch of the week. According to staff, croaker can also be found in deeper water.

Captain Jim reports the fish are biting like crazy. Croaker are up to 19 inches, and it is all you can catch. It is like the world is going to end, and they need their last supper. The places to be are the Range Light and along the cut channel. The Cell is producing nice flounder and many boats are getting their limits. He reports red drum landings with mullet and some bluefish available in the Bay. The Rappahannock and Piankatank Rivers are producing small croaker and some small trout. If you like croaker, the current Bay fishing will truly blow your mind.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Croaker are biting well in the Rappahannock on the north shore across from Grays Point and in the open bay and in the creeks. Some medium-sized spot are mixed in.

Flounder fishing at Buoy 42 and in the Cell area has improved a bit as the bay water warms and begins to clear from the storms. Speckled Trout fishing continues to be hot! We registered another six citation specks this week alone.

Spadefish have begun to bite at the Cell and at Wolftrap Light. We weighed in four citations from Wolftrap over the weekend. The biggest fish was weighed in mid-afternoon Friday at 13.96 lbs! The huge fish had been caught in the morning but had been in the cooler for several hours. It likely would have broken the state and IGFA record of 14.0 lbs, had it been weighed earlier. This 24" fish had a girth of almost 26", an inch greater than the existing record.

### **Virginia Beach**

Offshore boats are catching dolphin, white marlin, blue marlin, sailfish, and yellowfin tuna, according to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center. A citation dolphin was brought in this week. Spadefish are biting at the Chesapeake Light Tower, while taylor bluefish and Spanish mackerel are being caught off of the beach.

Both inshore and offshore fishing has been good out of Fisherman's Wharf Marina. Inshore, Spanish mackerel are numerous off of the beach. Spadefish are hot this week at the Chesapeake Light Tower. Offshore, anglers are catching plenty of gaffer dolphin, yellowfin tuna in the 30- to 40-pound range, and billfish. A white marlin was hooked last Saturday, and a blue marlin on Sunday.

### **Virginia Piers**

Fishing has improved at the Lynnhaven Pier. Anglers are finding spot, croaker, sea mullet, bluefish, and flounder. Last week, a few striped bass were hooked as well.

Spanish mackerel are the fish of the week at the Virginia Beach Pier. Anglers are also catching nice sized sea mullet, also called roundheads locally. Fishing has been good both day and night. The occasional striped

bass has been hooked and spot of various sizes have shown up. Crabbing is starting to pick up as well.

At the Sandbridge Pier, officially called the Little Island Fishing Pier, Spanish mackerel are biting. Spadefish have also been caught.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

Record high temperatures and smoke from wildfires have been the big news for people fishing on the coast of North Carolina this week. Those who braved these situations were rewarded with good fishing. In the surf, water temperatures have climbed past the 70 degree mark.

In the Nags Head area, offshore catches have included an increasing number of species as more summer denizens migrate into the area. Several species of tuna were caught, yellow fin, black fin, and big eye tuna, as well as gaffer sized dolphin, wahoo, king mackerel, amberjack, little tunny, and Atlantic bonito. Bill fish landings are also increasing, consisting of blue and white marlin. Closer to shore, anglers continue to catch striped bass, red drum, triggerfish and black sea bass. People fishing from the local piers have had catches dominated by bluefish and speckled trout in the mornings. Cobia were caught from the piers primarily in the nighttime hours.

Tuna continue to dominate the vessels heading offshore out of Oregon Inlet, consisting mostly of big eye tuna and yellowfin tuna. Gaffer dolphin are also being caught a few scattered billfish as well. Deep bottom fishing is producing tile fish, black sea bass, and a few grouper. Closer to shore, Spanish mackerel have been keeping anglers very happy along with a few cobia. Inside of Oregon Inlet, the catches of speckled trout and red drum have been consistent around the Melvin Daniels Bridge and in the Roanoke Sound area. Flounder fishing, as well as sheepshead and tautog fishing, continues to improve near bridge pilings.

South of Oregon Inlet, the cobia bite has been exciting for anglers with Ramp 43 being a promising location for a hook up. Sea mullet, bluefish, and Spanish mackerel, found around Ramp 49, have also kept cut bait fishermen and pluggers happy. One sea mullet landed weighed a nice 2 pounds, 13 ounces. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) and speckled trout can be found in the Pamlico Sound.

The bite offshore of Hatteras was very good for billfish this week. King mackerel, wahoo, dolphin, and yellowfin tuna round out the offerings for a productive week of offshore fishing. Inshore fishing produced an excellent bite of Spanish mackerel along with some bluefish and cobia making an appearance.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.














**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.**

*You catch it, you fillet it,*  
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

<b>COBIA</b>		<b>RED DRUM</b>	
<b>SHEEPSHEAD</b>		<b>BLACK DRUM</b>	
<b>SPADEFISH</b>		<b>TAUTOG</b>	
<b>TILEFISH</b>		<b>GROUPE</b>	
<b>KING MACKEREL</b>		<b>SPANISH MACKEREL</b>	
<b>BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)</b>			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

**Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:**

**Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)**

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)**

**Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)**

**Wachapreague Marina**

**Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)**



**Website: [http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec\\_assessment/index.shtm](http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm)**

As of 05/16/2008





## ATTENTION: VIRGINIA SALTWATER JOURNAL WEBSITE HAS BEEN UPDATED!

You will now be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released. Staff has updated the website to include this expanded tool, so on those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the 50 caught and a range of lengths. But remember, for more high profile species, such as Red Drum, Striped Bass, and Flounder (to name a few), individual measurements on caught and released fish places a greater value on the data you are providing.

[WWW.VASALTWATERJOURNAL.COM](http://WWW.VASALTWATERJOURNAL.COM)

**Fisherman's Journal - Mozilla Firefox**

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Address: [https://192.168.0.15/vasalwaterjournal/journal\\_entry.php](https://192.168.0.15/vasalwaterjournal/journal_entry.php)

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Virginia Marine Resour... mafmc.htm SAFMC New Site > Ho... NOAA Home Page Atlantic States Marine ... Striped Bass Charter B... CFLS Virginia Marine Resou... Recreational Fishing O... Welcome to ACCSP

Identification of launch site will allow fishery managers to evaluate and update the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) site register and thereby improve the data collected by the angler interviews.

Weather:

Seas:

Wind Speed:

Wind Direction:

Time of Day:

Moon Phase:

Air Temp (F):

Water Temp (F):

Number of Anglers Reporting For:

Hours Fished:

Notes:

To record your fish, click the "Add Fish" button below for each fish you intend to record. Record lengths in decimal format for partial inches (ex. 33.25). Total length is measured in a straightline from tip of nose to tip of tail. If you would like to make your catch data available to other anglers, ensure 'Make Public' is checked. To make your catch information only accessible to you(private), uncheck 'Make Public'. All catch data, both public and private, will be analyzed in aggregate by the VMRC and will never be associated with the individual angler.

**Record Your Catch**

**\* Required Fields: Species, Qty, Length (Minimum length for released fish), Catch**

You may enter a size range for released fish. The minimum length is required. For kept fish, the length is required.

(1) Kept Fish

\*Species:  \*Qty:  \*Length(inches):  Weight(lb):

Method:  Bait:  Tide:  ☒ Make Public

(2) Released Fish

\*Species:  \*Qty:  Enter Length Range \*Min Length(inches):  Max Length(inches):

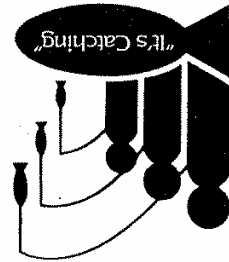
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## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**